

# Consumer Awareness of Furniture Stability Risks and Prevention

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*- Prepared for -*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) administers product safety regulations and monitors the safety of general consumer products nation-wide. This includes regulating over 60 mandatory standards and bans on a range of products related to infant and nursery, vehicle maintenance, toys, clothing, blinds and curtains, home wares and more.

This research focuses on the particular dangers of common furniture in homes with children under the age of five. Young children tend to climb on furniture such as freestanding bookcases, wardrobes, and sideboards etc. which can present a safety hazard to a child. The weight of a small child can cause a piece of furniture to topple over, causing severe injuries. Several hundred children are injured this way each year; some fatally.

The risk of injuries and deaths from furniture toppling over has become a significant issue over recent years and the ACCC seeks to improve consumer understanding of the hazards and risks as well as preventative measures. Currently the ACCC has minimal quantitative data relating to the incidents of toppling furniture and young children's safety around their homes.

In order to understand consumer awareness of the risks involved – barriers to preventative action and methods to increase awareness of the risks with consumers – the ACCC commissioned Roy Morgan Research to conduct an online survey re-contacting *Single Source* respondents with children under five years old.

The survey was fielded from 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015 with 650 respondents completing the survey (a response rate of 7%). The results were weighted to represent parents with children less than five years old by age and gender, using *Single Source* estimates.

This research was carried out in compliance with ISO 9001 & ISO 20252.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Sample was drawn from Roy Morgan Research's *Single Source* database, with 50,000 interviews conducted annually using an address based method. Respondent demographic information such as age, gender and family status was recorded as part of *Single Source*, which enables targeted sampling of specific groups.

Respondents who had at least one child aged 0-5 years old when they were initially interviewed for *Single Source*, were selected to complete the online survey. The sample was then screened to update their demographic information, confirm that children 0-5 years old lived in the respondent's home and that the respondent was a parent or guardian of those children. Note respondents under 18 years old, who preferred not to provide their age or location, or were no longer living in Australia, were screened out of the survey.

A demographic breakdown of respondents is provided in Table 1 on page 3 and raw demographic counts are provided in Appendix C. No quotas were set on the sample, to ensure as many responses as possible, which resulted in an oversampling of respondents over 35 years old and female respondents. In order to correct this oversampling, weighting was applied based on the proportion of parents with children less than 5 years old by age and gender. All results in this report are based on the weighted data.

The questionnaire was designed by the ACCC with input from Roy Morgan Research. The main topics covered by the questionnaire included: perceived risks of toppling furniture, level of awareness of the risks, types of furniture purchased in the last two years, information or equipment provided by the retailer, incidents of injury or near misses and reasons why respondents would not purchase preventative equipment in the future.

A response rate of 7% was achieved for this survey and respondents were incentivized with points redeemable for cash for their participation. The survey averaged 8.11 minutes to complete, and was fielded between 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The maximum 95% confidence interval for this research is approximately  $\pm 3.40\%$ .

Note, throughout this report cells which have a value less than 0.5% have been rounded to 0%. Cells which had no responses have a dash to differentiate.

Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of Respondents

Demographic Information	% of Respondents
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	46%
Female	54%
<b>Age</b>	
18-19 years old	-
20-24 years old	2%
25-29 years old	13%
30-34 years old	34%
35-39 years old	23%
40-44 years old	19%
45-49 years old	6%
50-54 years old	2%
55-59 years old	0%
60-64 years old	1%
65-69 years old	0%
70+ years old	0%
<b>Region</b>	
Australian Capital Territory	3%
Sydney	14%
New South Wales excluding Sydney	13%
Melbourne	13%
Victoria excluding Melbourne	8%
Brisbane	10%
Queensland excluding Brisbane	13%
Adelaide	8%
South Australia excluding Adelaide	2%
Northern Territory	1%
Hobart	2%
Tasmania excluding Hobart	2%
Perth	8%
Western Australia excluding Perth	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **3. MAIN FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 Summary of Findings**

- The majority of parents are aware of the risks posed to young children by falling furniture.
- Those who are not aware or have minimal awareness are less likely to know how to prevent falling furniture, if their furniture has been secured and take preventative action in the future.
- Sideboards, TV stands and entertainment units are not thought of as furniture that can be anchored to a wall.
- Chests of drawers are the most likely furniture piece to not have instructions or equipment provided on purchase.
- Bookcases and bookshelves are most likely to have both instructions and equipment provided when purchased.
- One-quarter of parents have experienced an incident of falling furniture – this was generally a near miss incident.
- Parents generally want to know the types of furniture that are most often involved when children are injured and how to attach brackets or anchors. This would be best communicated through pamphlets with the furniture.
- Most parents would be likely to purchase anchors or brackets in the future.

#### **3.2 Awareness and Perception of the Risk**

The majority of parents knew something about the risk of toppling furniture and how to prevent danger to young children. Over half (54%) of parents knew a reasonable amount about the risks and dangers, while one in five (23%) knew a little and 16% knew a lot about the risks. A minority had not heard of the risks of toppling furniture, prior to this research (7%).

The top five most frequently mentioned methods to prevent toppling furniture were:

- Attach, mount, bolt or otherwise secure the furniture to the walls (50%)
- Purchase low-set furniture or furniture with sturdy bases (21%)
- Supervise children at all times (11%)
- Do not put heavy items on the top shelves of bookcases and place the television at the back of the cabinet (11%)
- Attach or secure furniture to the floor (9%)

Only 12% of parents did not know or could not remember how to prevent toppling furniture. Parents who had never heard of the risks of toppling furniture were, as one would expect, significantly more likely than other parents of other awareness levels to answer ‘Don’t Know / Can’t Remember’ when asked about the best methods to prevent toppling furniture (59%). Parents who claimed to know a lot about the risks of toppling

furniture mentioned securing furniture to the walls, significantly more than parents with other awareness levels (61%).

**3.3 Types of Furniture Purchased in Last Two Years**

Table 2 below illustrates the proportions of furniture purchased in the last two years along with the specific type of furniture referred to in the questionnaire. Based on the responses to ‘Other’, new codes for furniture types were added for ‘Tables’ (which includes side, coffee and change tables) and ‘Desks’.

Most respondents had purchased a piece of freestanding furniture in the last two years, which was most frequently a bookcase or bookshelves (49%), followed by a chest of drawers (41%), freestanding television (35%) and then TV stand or entertainment unit (32%). Only 15% had not purchased any freestanding furniture in the last two years.

**Table 2. Freestanding Furniture Purchased in Last Two Years**

Type of Furniture	Purchased in Last Two Years	Most Recently Purchased
Bookcase or bookshelves	49%	27%
Chest of drawers	41%	17%
Freestanding television	35%	17%
TV stand or entertainment unit	32%	12%
Sideboard	11%	2%
Wardrobe or cupboard	22%	7%
Table	1%	1%
Desk	1%	0%
Other	2%	2%
<b>None of these</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100%</b>

**3.4 Information and Equipment Provided with Most Recent Purchase**

Of the parents who had purchased freestanding furniture in the last two years, over two-fifths (42%) said their furniture came without equipment or directions about securing the furniture. More one-quarter (27%) said that their furniture came with both equipment and instructions; a minority recalled that the furniture came with either equipment (2%) or instructions (9%) and 5% did not know.

Parents who purchased bookcases or bookshelves most recently were significantly more likely to recall that the furniture came with either equipment or instructions (46%) than parents who purchased other types of furniture. Chests of drawers were most likely, compared to other types of furniture, to not have equipment or instructions provided when

most recently purchased (57%). Half (51%) of the parents who most recently purchased a sideboard were significantly more likely, than those who purchased other types of furniture, to believe that this was not the sort of furniture that could be secured to a wall.

When asked explicitly if the furniture they most recently purchased came with information about furniture dangers almost a quarter (24%) of parents who had purchased freestanding furniture in the last two years could not remember. Only 19% of parents who purchased furniture said that it came with information about the dangers. Parents who most recently purchased a freestanding television were significantly more likely, than those who purchased other furniture types, to recall receiving furniture danger information (30%).

#### *3.4.1 Retailer Discussed Furniture Risks*

An overwhelming majority of parents who had purchased freestanding furniture in the last two years said the retailer did not discuss the risks associated with freestanding furniture (95%). As a result, the follow up question regarding the retailer's action had minimal responses and requires caution when interpreting the results. Parents who did recall the retailer discussing the risks of toppling furniture indicated that the retailer talked about the risks and explained how to secure the furniture to the wall.

### **3.5 Incidents of Danger Experienced by Any Young Child**

Almost three-quarters of parents had not experienced an incident of toppling furniture which had endangered a child (73%). Of those who had experienced an incident, the majority (87%) had experienced a near miss and 23% had experienced a child injured by toppling furniture.

As the sub-sample of respondents whose child experienced an injury due to toppling furniture is quite small, caution is advised when interpreting these results. The majority of injuries were minor (74%), one-fifth (21%) of injuries were moderate and only 2% were severe. In the majority of near miss cases the piece of furniture missed hitting the child by chance (59%). While in 39% of cases someone prevented the injuries from occurring.

### **3.6 Parent's Information Needs**

Table 3, overleaf, lists the categories of information requested by parents. Parents, who had never heard of the risks of toppling furniture, were significantly less likely to want to know how to attach brackets or anchors (19%) or where to purchase brackets or anchors (13%), compared to parents who were more aware of the risks.

**Table 3. The Types of Information Required**

Type of Information	Percent Selected
Types of furniture that are most often involved when children are injured	40%
How to attach brackets or anchors	38%
Where to purchase brackets or anchors	29%
What should be provided by retailers	18%
How children can be injured	18%
Statistics about how often children are injured and how severely	14%
What kind of injuries children can receive	8%
All of the above	35%
Other	2%
Don't know	3%
<b>None / Common sense</b>	<b>3%</b>

*3.6.1 Best Methods to Communicate the Risk of Toppling Furniture*

Table 4 below displays the results. Four-fifths of parents identified any kind of pamphlet (81%) as the best method to communicate the risks of toppling furniture. Almost half (48%) identified websites as the most effective method and one-third of parents (33%) mentioned social media.

**Table 4. Best Methods to Inform Parents about the Risks of Toppling Furniture**

Method to Inform	Percent Selected
Pamphlets or brochures with the furniture itself	75%
Equipment for securing furniture supplied with the furniture itself	66%
Information on parenting or children's health and wellbeing blogs or websites	40%
Pamphlets or brochures in store	36%
Posts on Facebook	33%
Information on government websites	28%
An awareness day or week	12%
Posts on Twitter	9%
Don't Know	0%
<b>None of these</b>	<b>2%</b>

Parents who knew a little bit about the risks were significantly less likely than other awareness groups to say pamphlets (64%) or equipment provided with the furniture (56%) were the best methods of communicating the risks. Whereas parents who knew a reasonable amount about the risks, significantly preferred pamphlets provided with the furniture (82%).

**3.7 Future Likelihood to Purchase Anchors and Brackets**

Just under one-third of parents were somewhat likely to purchase anchors or brackets (31%) and another 23% were very likely to purchase the equipment in future. A little more than one-quarter (27%) would be somewhat or very unlikely to purchase equipment in future.

Compared to parents with other awareness levels, parents who claimed to know a lot about the risks were significantly more likely to say they would be very likely to purchase brackets or anchors in the future (36%). Parents who had only heard a little about the risks were significantly less likely than parents with higher awareness levels to say the same (16%).

Parents who were unlikely to purchase anchors or brackets in the future were asked why they would be unlikely to purchase safety equipment. The most common response was that it was not necessary (11%) or the property was rented (also 11%). This group of parents also mentioned that they purchased good quality, sturdy or safe furniture that was unlikely to be toppled (9%), their children were taught not to climb on furniture (8%), and that if the furniture was unsafe they would expect the equipment to be provided with the purchase (7%).

**3.8 Furniture At Home Currently Secured**

More than one-third of parents did not think that any freestanding furniture in their home was secured or anchored (38%), however, a similar proportion (34%) had secured a little of their freestanding furniture. Only one-fifth (20%) thought most of the freestanding furniture in their home had been secured or anchored.

Parents who had never heard of or had only heard a little about the risks that toppling furniture posed young children were both significantly more likely to say the freestanding furniture in their home was not secured or anchored (66% and 47% respectively) than parents who were more aware of the risks. In a similar vein, half (50%) of those parents who were unlikely to purchase brackets or anchors in the future said they did not know if any of their freestanding furniture had been secured.

## 4. APPENDICES

### 4.1 Appendix A – ISO20252 Compliance Index

Research Overview	
Statement of Compliance with International Standards:	See Introduction on page 1.
Client Name:	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
Research Service Provider Name:	Roy Morgan Research
Sub-contractor(s) used:	None
Process sub-contracted:	None
Research Objectives:	See Introduction on page 1.
Quantitative Research	
Target Groups	Parents (aged over 18 years old) who have a child, five years old or younger at home.
Proposed Sample Sizes:	650
Actual Sample Sizes:	650
Reasons for Difference in Proposed to Actual Sample Size:	No difference.
Fieldwork Period:	8 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2015
Sampling Method:	Drawn from <i>Single Source</i> respondents who have consented to future research.
Data Collection Methods:	Online survey
Response Rate:	7%
Weighting Processes:	Parents with children under 5 years old by age and gender. Under/Over 35 years old x Male/Female.
Estimation/Imputation Procedures:	None.
Representatively of the Sample Populations:	Representative of parents with children under 5 years old by age and gender.
Maximum Sampling Tolerance:	± 3.40%
Incentive Type:	Points redeemable for cash.
Interview Validation Methods Used:	Visual check of open-ended responses.
Questionnaire Attached to Report:	See Appendix B on page 10.

**4.2 Appendix B – Questionnaire**

**SCREENING AND QUOTA BUILDING**

[Single]

SDGEN. STANDARD DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION

Please select your gender.

1. Male
2. Female

[Single]

SDAGE. STANDARD DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION

Please choose your age from the following ranges:

1. 14-15
2. 16-17
3. 18-19
4. 20-24
5. 25-29
6. 30-34
7. 35-39
8. 40-44
9. 45-49
10. 50-54
11. 55-59
12. 60-64
13. 65-69
14. 70+
99. Prefer not to say

**\*IF SDAGE = 1 OR 2 OR 99 TERMINATE**

[Single]

SDARE. STANDARD DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION

Please indicate the area in which you live

1. Australian Capital Territory
  2. Sydney
  3. NSW excluding Sydney
  4. Melbourne
  5. Victoria excluding Melbourne
  6. Brisbane
  7. Queensland excluding Brisbane
  8. Adelaide
  9. South Australia excluding Adelaide
  10. Northern Territory
-

- 11. Hobart
- 12. Tasmania excluding Hobart
- 13. Perth
- 14. Western Australia excluding Perth
- 15. Outside Australia
- 99. Prefer not to say

**\*IF SDARE=15 OR 99 TERMINATE**

[Single]

SCREEN 1. Do any children aged 0-5 years live in your home? (This includes children who live here either all the time or part of the time).

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

**\*IF SCREEN1 = 2 TERMINATE**

SCREEN 2. Are you a parent or guardian of any of those children?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

**\*IF SCREEN2 = 2 TERMINATE**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE BODY**

This survey is about the risk of toppling furniture and young children.

[Single]

AWARE1. Which of the following best describes you?

- 1. Before today I had never heard about the risk of toppling furniture and young children
- 2. I have heard a little bit about the risk of toppling furniture and how to prevent danger to young children.
- 3. I know a reasonable amount about the risk of toppling furniture and how to prevent danger to young children.
- 4. I know a lot about the risk of toppling furniture and how to prevent danger to young children

[Open]

AWARE2. Based on your knowledge, what are the best ways to prevent toppling furniture?

- 98. Don't know

[Multiple] [Randomise codes 1 to 6 inclusive]

FURN1. Which of the following types of freestanding furniture have you bought, either new or used, in the last 2 years?

1. Chest of drawers
2. Wardrobe or cupboards
3. Bookcase or bookshelves
4. Sideboard
5. TV stand or entertainment unit
6. Freestanding television
96. None of these
97. Other – please specify [open]

**\*(IF MORE THAN ONE CODE, 1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4 OR 5 OR 6 OR 97 ON FURN1)**

**\*PROGRAMMER NOTE: ONLY DISPLAY CODES SELECTED IN FURN1. IF ONLY ONE CODE AT FURN1, THEN AUTOPUNCH.**

[Single]

FURN2. Which piece of freestanding furniture did you purchase most recently? (If you purchased more than one of these categories most recently, please mark in relation to the type highest on the list)

1. Chest of drawers
2. Wardrobe or cupboards
3. Bookcase or bookshelves
4. Sideboard
5. TV stand or entertainment unit
6. Freestanding television
97. <OTHER FROM FURN2>

**\*(IF 1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4 OR 5 OR 6 OR 97 ON FURN2)**

[Single]

FURN3. Did the <CODE FROM FURN2> come with equipment, instructions or directions to secure it to a wall?

1. Yes – came with equipment and instructions for securing to a wall
2. Yes – came with equipment but no instructions
3. Yes – came with instructions but no equipment
4. No – came with neither equipment nor instructions for securing to a wall
5. Not applicable – it is not the sort of furniture that could be secured to a wall
98. Don't know

[Single]

FURN4. Did the <CODE FROM FURN2> come with any information about furniture dangers?

1. Yes
2. No
98. Don't know

**\*(IF 1 OR 2 OR 3 OR 4 OR 5 OR 6 OR 97 ON FURN1)**

[Single]

FURN5. When you purchased the <CODE FROM FURN2>, did the retailer talk to you about the risks of falling or toppling furniture?

1. Yes
2. No
98. Don't know

**\*(IF 1 ON FURN5)**

[Multiple]

FURN6. Which of the following did the retailer do or say?

1. Talked about the risks
2. Said that I should secure furniture to the wall, but didn't explain how
3. Explained how to secure furniture to the wall
97. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_ [open]
98. Can't remember

**\*(ALL)**

[Single]

INCIDENT1. Has any young child of yours ever:

1. Been injured due to toppling furniture?
2. Had a near miss being injured due to toppling furniture?
3. Both of these
4. Neither of these
99. Can't say

**\*(IF 1 OR 3 ON INCIDENT1)**

[Multiple]

INCIDENT3. Thinking of the incident(s) where injury occurred, how severe were the injuries?

1. The injuries were minor
  2. The injuries were moderate
  3. The injuries were severe
  99. Can't say
-

**\*(IF 2 OR 3 ON INCIDENT1)**

[Single]

INCIDENT4. Thinking of the 'near miss' incident(s), what happened?

1. Someone was there and prevented any injuries
2. By chance, the piece of furniture missed hitting the child
99. Can't say

**\*(ALL)**

[Multiple] [Randomise codes 1 to 7 inclusive]

WARN1. What kind of information would you need to know in order to minimise the risks of falling furniture in your home?

1. How children can be injured
2. What kind of injuries they can receive
3. Statistics about how often children are injured and how severely
4. Where to purchase brackets or anchors
5. How to attach brackets or anchors
6. Types of furniture that are most often involved when children are injured
7. What should be provided by retailers
95. All of the above
97. Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_ [open]
98. Don't know

[Multiple] [Flip codes 1 to 8 inclusive]

WARN2. What are the best methods to inform you (and people like you) about minimising the dangers of freestanding furniture around children?

1. Pamphlets or brochures in store
2. Pamphlets or brochures with the furniture itself
3. Equipment for securing furniture supplied with the furniture itself
4. Posts on Facebook
5. Posts on Twitter
6. An awareness day or week
7. Information on parenting or children's health and wellbeing blogs or websites
8. Information on government websites
96. None of these
98. Don't know

[Single] [Flip codes 1 to 5 inclusive]

FUTURE1. The next time you want to purchase freestanding furniture, how likely would you be to buy anchors or brackets if they were not included?

1. Very likely
2. Somewhat likely
3. Neither likely nor unlikely
4. Somewhat unlikely
5. Very unlikely

**\*(IF CODES 4 OR 5)**

[Open]

FUTURE2. Why would you be unlikely to buy anchors or brackets to secure your furniture, if there were none provided?

**\*(ALL)**

ANCHOR1. Anchoring freestanding furniture to walls is, of course, something that many parents will not have thought much about or done much about before now. That is completely understandable.

Which of the following best describes you and your home?

1. I don't think any freestanding furniture in this house has been secured or anchored.
2. I don't know whether any freestanding furniture in this house has been secured/anchored or not.
3. I or my partner have secured/anchored a little of the freestanding furniture
4. I or my partner have secured/anchored most of the freestanding furniture
5. Someone other than I or my partner secured/anchored the freestanding furniture in this home.
6. Something else – please specify [open]

## 4.3 Appendix C – Sample Demographic Counts

Demographic Information	Frequency
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	268
Female	382
<b>Age</b>	
18-19 years old	-
20-24 years old	14
25-29 years old	69
30-34 years old	170
35-39 years old	184
40-44 years old	146
45-49 years old	43
50-54 years old	15
55-59 years old	1
60-64 years old	5
65-69 years old	1
70+ years old	2
<b>Region</b>	
Australian Capital Territory	21
Sydney	94
New South Wales excluding Sydney	75
Melbourne	89
Victoria excluding Melbourne	50
Brisbane	60
Queensland excluding Brisbane	80
Adelaide	51
South Australia excluding Adelaide	13
Northern Territory	9
Hobart	16
Tasmania excluding Hobart	14
Perth	57
Western Australia excluding Perth	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>650</b>